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SUBJECT: LATVIA'S PROPOSED AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON -
ANDREJS PILDEGOVICS

Classified By: Ambassador Catherine Todd Bailey. Reason: 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: Latvia has nominated Andrejs Pildegovics, currently President Vike-Freiberga's Chief of Staff, as its next Ambassador to Washington and Mexico City. We have had a long and productive relationship with Pildegovics and have always found him accessible. While his academic and career background make him probably the Latvian government's greatest China expert, his nearly seven years of working for the President, six as foreign policy advisor and chief of staff since July, have given him a broad scope of experience. He is personally well connected to many of the key players in Latvian foreign policy. End summary.

¶2. (U) Andrejs Pildegovics was born in August 11, 1971 in Vladivostok, where his Latvian native father, Peteris Pildegovics, taught languages at a university. His mother, Galina Panina, is ethnic Russian. Pildegovics holds a degree in Chinese language, culture and geography from the University of St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad State University), which he entered in 1989. In 1991, as part of his studies, he traveled to Tibet, and remained in China for a year of language training. He began his career at the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994, and has held various posts such as assistant to the State Secretary, press spokesman, and head of the Asia and Africa Department. In 2000, Pildegovics began working as President Vike-Freiberga's foreign policy advisor. In the summer of 2006, he replaced Martins Bondars as the president's chief of staff. He is fluent in Latvian, Russian, English and Chinese. His ethnic Russian wife, Jelena, is a teacher of Eastern languages and also speaks fluent Chinese. They have three children.

¶3. (C/NF) When PM Aigars Kalvitis told President Vike-Freiberga at the NATO summit that he would recall current Ambassador to Washington Maris Riekstins to be his Chief of Staff, Vike-Freiberga responded that she wanted to see Pildegovics go as the replacement. While Kalvitis and FM Pabriks toyed with other names, in the end they decided to support Pildegovics and in just over three weeks he had been approved by the foreign affairs committee of Parliament, in Latvia a prerequisite to requesting agreement.

¶4. (C/NF) We have had extensive contact with Pildegovics in his work for the President. We have found him to be a reliable interlocutor. He is generally a calm and quiet person, rarely fazed, even in high pressure situation. In meetings, he often wants to hear from others first, even if he has called the meeting. He rarely will show his hand right away, preferring to take issues under consideration before reaching a final decision. In this he is nearly the complete opposite of his predecessor, Martins Bondars. Where Bondars would reach decisions instantly and could seemingly

juggle two conversations and three phone calls at the same time, Pildegovics approaches things in a more deliberate manner. He brings his impressive intellect to bear on every issue and when he announces a decision, it is clear he has given it a lot of thought. At the same time, contacts in the Latvian government sometimes express frustration that at the end of a session with Pildegovics they have no clearer idea of where he or the President stand on the issue, or find they have to wait for instruction when they had hoped for a quick answer.

¶ 15. (C/NF) Perhaps it is a result of his China expertise and experience, but Pildegovics' deliberate style and lack of snap decisions reflect a focus on the longer view. For example, when briefing Emboff about the visit of former Russian President Yeltsin to Latvia in August, Pildegovics spent most of the time musing about how this could pay benefits down the road when most other interlocutors were focused on the significance of the moment. In other conversations on policy issues, he has taken a similar long term view about where a policy will lead in five - ten years.

¶ 16. (C/NF) Pildegovics is deeply loyal to the President and always concerned to protect her equities in a policy discussion. He seems to genuinely feel that it would be wrong of him to leave for Washington before her term in office is up in early July and Latvia will take a nearly six month gap in Washington as a result. Vike-Freiberga has, through force of personality and intellect, built a role for herself in foreign affairs far broader than that envisioned by the Constitution. In doing so, she has largely ignored the foreign ministry, especially under minister Pabriks, whom she personally dislikes. Pildegovics has taken the same attitude and one senior Latvian official said that Pildegovics is unlikely to take much direction from Pabriks or MFA State Secretary Penke. Instead, he will rely on discussions with Bondars, former Ambassador to Washington and NATO Avis Ronis, and his predecessor in Washington, Maris Riekstins (who has returned to become PM Kalvitis' Chief of Staff), in developing his approaches in Washington. In the end, this will not be much different from the situation under Riekstins, who relied on the same group for his counsel. Pildegovics continues to play hockey on a weekly basis on a team with Bondars and regularly consults by phone and in person with Ronis and Riekstins.

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